

History of the Department of Veterans Affairs Chaplain Service

- **1865** - The history of the Department of Veterans Affairs Chaplain Service began on March 3, 1865, when Abraham Lincoln signed legislation establishing the first National Homes for disabled volunteer soldiers. Chaplains were paid a salary of "\$1,500 per year and forage for one horse."
- **1944** - On June 7, 1944, the General Commission on Chaplains and Armed Forces Personnel negotiated with the Veterans Administration to take responsibility for the service of VA Chaplains.
- **1945** - On June 15, 1945, Chaplain Crawford Brown was appointed the first National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- **1945** - On November 28, 1945, Veterans Administrator General Omar Bradley authorized the National Director of VA Chaplain Service to place full-time and part-time VA Chaplains in all Veterans Administration hospitals.
- **1947** - On August 13, 1947, Chaplain Alexander McKelway was appointed the National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- **1950** - On April 2, 1950, Chaplain Edward McDonough was appointed the National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- **1962** - On August 6, 1962, the United States Congress passed an amendment to Title 38 that provided the Administrator of the Veterans Administration to designate a member of the Chaplain Service as National Director of Chaplain Service for a period of two years only. Previously there was no legal restriction on the length of time an individual could remain the National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- **1962** - On August 9, 1962, Chaplain Morris Sandhaus was appointed the National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- **1964** - In August 1964, the Veterans Administration Chaplain School was established at the Jefferson Barracks VA Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri.
- **1966** - On August 9, 1966, Chaplain Roger Bratten was appointed the National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- **1970** - On August 9, 1970, Chaplain Raymar Bobber was appointed the National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- **1974** - On August 9, 1974, Chaplain James Rogers was appointed the National Director of Chaplain Service.
- **1974** - In 1974, the VA Central Office agreed to establish Chief of Chaplain Service positions at field facilities.

- 1975 – In 1975, the Jefferson Barracks VA Chaplain School was closed due to a lack of funds.
- 1978 - On August 1, 1978, Chaplain Corbin Cherry was appointed the National Director of VA Chaplain Service. Chaplain Cherry was the first combat wounded VA Chaplain to hold the position.
- 1982 - On January 1, 1982, the General Commission on Chaplains and the Conference of Ecclesiastical Endorsing Agents for the Veterans Administration merge as the Endorsers Conference for Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy (ECVAC).
- 1982 - On January 2, 1982, Chaplain James Martin was appointed the National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- 1984 - On January 1, 1984, Chaplain Simeon Kobrinetz was appointed the National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- 1988 – In 1988, Chaplain Herbert Cleveland was appointed the National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- 1992 - In January 1992, the VA Central Office Chaplain Service was moved to Hampton, Virginia.
- 1992 - In June 1992, Chaplain Roger Brady was appointed as National Director of Chaplain Service.
- 1994 - On September 2, 1994, Chaplain Matthew Zimmerman was appointed as National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- 1999 - On February 28, 1999, Chaplain Jeni Cook was appointed as National Director of Chaplain Service.
- 1999 - On October 1, 1999, the VA Academic Affairs Office provided the first stipends for VA Chaplain Trainees in VA Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Programs.
- 2004 - On June 2, 2004, Chaplain Hugh Maddry was appointed the National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- 2008 - On August 31, 2008, Chaplain Keith Ethridge was appointed the National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- 2012 - On December 16, 2012, Chaplain Michael Pollitt was appointed the National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- 2015 - On November 30, 2015, Chaplain Michael McCoy was appointed the National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- 2019 - On January 20, 2019, Chaplain Juliana Lesher was appointed the National Director of VA Chaplain Service.
- 2019 – On April 1, 2019, the VA Chaplain Virtual Training Program began. The National VA Chaplain Training Center was closed at that time.

- 2020 – On January 19, 2020, the National VA Chaplain Service at VA Central Office in Washington, DC was established. Thus, the National VA Chaplain Center in Hampton, Virginia was closed.
- 2020 – On January 19, 2020, the National Director of VA Chaplain Service became a direct report to the Under Secretary for Health (USH).
- 2020 – On April 1, 2020, every local VA Chaplain Service became an independent Service that reports to a member of the local VA Executive Leadership Team (ELT).
- 2020 – On July 15, 2020, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) approved the first-ever HCPCS (Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System) Codes for VA Chaplains. The approval of the three new HCPCS Codes for VA Chaplains provided for VA Chaplains to have clinical, count workload instead of administrative, non-count workload starting on October 1, 2020.
- 2020 – On September 27, 2020, VA Chaplains converted from Title 5 Employees to Title 38-Hybrid Employees. Thus, VA Chaplains officially become clinical employees.
- 2020 – In December 2020, the first ever VACO Chapel was established along with a Wall of Honor to recognize all the VA Employees who died of Coronavirus Pandemic.
- 2022 – In April 2022, National Chaplain Center CPE Center Established
- 2022 – On September 11, 2022, Chaplain Kimberly R. Willis was appointed the Executive Director VA Chaplain Service